



80 years of the Soil Association

2026 sees the Soil Association celebrate its 80th birthday!

Founded in 1946 by a group of people concerned about the increasingly intensive farming practices in the UK following World War II, the Soil Association was one of the founders of the global organic movement. They developed some of the world's first organic standards and launched an organic certification service in 1973.

Today the Soil Association:

- develops high standards for food, farming, health and beauty and textiles, as well as for forestry and works across Europe to influence legislation.
- campaigns for change by collecting and providing evidence to government to support positive changes to food, farming and land-use laws.
- promotes 'Food for Life', an initiative that aims to make good food the easy choice for everyone - making healthy, tasty and sustainable meals the norm, reconnecting people with where their food comes from by teaching them how it's grown and cooked, and championing the importance of well-sourced ingredients.
- supports growth in the organic sector with technical advice and marketing support.
- encourages farming innovation by providing a platform for farmers and growers to develop skills, share knowledge and connect with one another.
- celebrates the role of trees and forests by protecting over 26 million hectares through the support of over 4000 forestry, wood and paper clients.

Despite its achievements in championing nature over the last 80 years, Soil Association CEO Helen Browning OBE states, "We will not be satisfied until every child has a healthy and sustainable diet, until every forest is managed regeneratively, until every farm has a viable pathway to a resilient, ethical, nature and climate-positive future." Our policy at True Food is to support organic growing, production and consumption as we believe that organic production supports a healthier planet and healthier people.

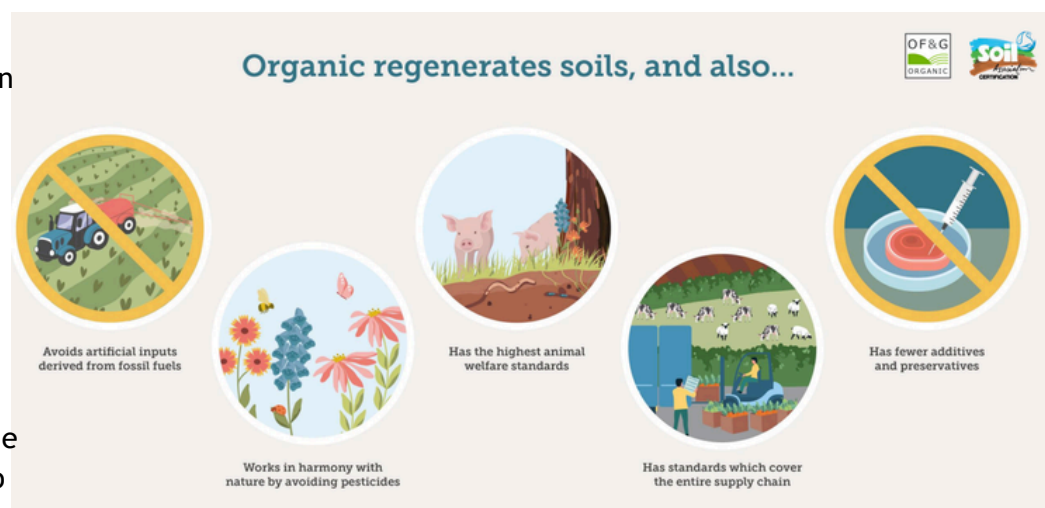
How, what and where!

Each month we hope to provide some insight into some True Food-centric questions.






This month: Why regenerative farming is good but Organic is even better!

Regenerative farming is a collection of techniques available to arable farmers to improve soil structure and nutrient levels without the environmental harm that comes from the use of chemical fertiliser, pesticides and (sometimes) irrigation water and deep ploughing. Key elements are the use of composting and green manures, along with the no-dig approach that is similar to that advocated by many allotment holders. It's hard to get right, but farmers such as Iain Tolhurst, a True Food supplier, have made huge strides in increasing crop yields with regenerative techniques.

Sounds good, you're thinking, but on its own regenerative farming is not an alternative to organic farming, it's just one component of it. All organic farming includes regenerative practices, but organic certification verifies the whole food production process, not just the crop-growing part. Whereas regenerative farming has no formal certification process, and doesn't cover what happens in the production chain before or after crop production.



Organic regenerates soils, and also...

-  Avoids artificial inputs derived from fossil fuels
-  Has the highest animal welfare standards
-  Works in harmony with nature by avoiding pesticides
-  Has standards which cover the entire supply chain
-  Has fewer additives and preservatives

OF&G ORGANIC | SOIL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION

World Bee Day: 20th May

World Bee Day is celebrated annually, marking the birthday of Anton Janša, a pioneer of modern beekeeping. The event is designated by the United Nations to raise global awareness of the importance of pollinators. Unfortunately bee numbers are declining globally due to threats from:

- factory farming, which drives widespread habitat destruction and loss and exposes bees to harmful pesticides.
- habitat destruction, natural landscapes and the associated fauna and flora are being lost to urbanisation and infrastructure developments.
- climate change, as global temperatures change and weather becomes more unpredictable, bees' life cycles are shifting and the vegetation they rely on is developing at different rates.

Why are bees important?

Bees are important because they're responsible for pollinating the vast majority of flowering plants. Bees collect pollen and nectar, fertilising the plants that humans and other animals rely on for food as they travel from flower to flower. Humans and other wildlife simply couldn't survive without bees



Bee Facts

- Bees have five eyes, two large ones and three smaller ones in the centre of their heads.
- Bees and flowers are interdependent, as bees need pollen and nectar for food, while plants need bees to enable their reproduction.
- Bees carrying pollen look like they have two orange sacks stuck to their hairy legs.
- A third of the world's food production depends on bees, as they pollinate three-quarters of the most popular global crops.
- Bees don't want to sting you. They're more docile than hornets and wasps and only sting when they feel threatened.

How you can help bees

Choose organic food. Organic farming creates havens for insect species including bees. On average organic farms have 30% more biodiversity than non-organic. Organic farmers are permitted to use just 20 pesticides, compared to around 400 in non-organic farming. These 20 pesticides are derived from natural ingredients - things like citronella and clove oil, and are only permitted under very restricted circumstances.

Avoid using pesticides in your garden. Pesticides, including weedkillers, remove potential food plants and prey species for those pollinators that have herbivorous or predatory larvae. According to Ordnance Survey, residential gardens make up 520 hectares of land area in the UK, so replacing chemical pesticides and fertilisers with organic approved ones over that area would have a huge beneficial impact on water and soil quality and the biodiversity in our gardens.

Don't cut your grass. During May the British Bee Keepers Association supports 'No Mow May' where the public are asked to not mow their lawns to allow wildflowers to grow to provide pollen and nectar as food for all pollinating insects.

Our local honeys

Some of our most popular products are our local honeys. Each unique in flavour, we are delighted to stock honey from: Jenny's Bees, Highmoor Honey and Honeys of Henley.



Children's Pollinator Hunt, Saturday 16 May

As part of Reading Children's Festival, True Food are encouraging younger shoppers to track down the pollinators hidden around the store. Find them all and claim a small prize.



Opening Times

Tuesday to Saturday
9 am to 6 pm

61 Grove Road, Emmer Green, RG4 8LJ

Tel: 0118 946 1188 Web: www.truefood.coop

